

Late Friday, the House passed Biden's infrastructure bill. As the *Washington Post* aptly observed, the bill is the biggest climate legislation to ever move through Congress. It also attracted key support from some Republicans, which was essential to passing it in both houses of Congress. Biden is pushing for an even bigger companion bill, but the infrastructure bill is a huge victory in its own right.

One major area of spending is transportation. Some of that goes for roads and bridges. But as the *Washington Post* [reports](#), there's a lot of money for rail and mass transit:

"Another \$66 billion will go to passenger and freight rail, including enough money to eliminate Amtrak's maintenance backlog. Yet another \$39 billion will modernize public transit, and \$11 billion more will be set aside for transportation safety, including programs to reduce fatalities among pedestrians and cyclists."

There's also \$7.5 billion in funding for zero and low-emission buses and ferries. There's another \$7.5 billion to build out charging capacity for electric vehicles, and \$6 billion for energy storage.

The law also addresses a big bottleneck in the energy system: lack of adequate long-distance transmission capacity. We will need much more robust transmission to achieve a carbon neutral grid. For instance, Iowa can generate more wind power than it can get to markets in Chicago and further east. Transmission also helps to deal with weather issues: even if it's too cloudy for solar in one state, the sun may be shining a state or two over. The effort to build new transmission has been stymied, however, by resistance from utilities and state governments.

Under an earlier law, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission had the power to designate national transmission corridors where new transmission is urgently needed. If states refused to authorize transmission projects in those corridors, FERC could take over and approve the projects. Unfortunately, federal court rulings created a giant loophole. The infrastructure bill overturns those judicial decisions. That's not a cure-all for the barriers facing new transmission lines but it does eliminate a major roadblock.

Much more will need to be done if we're going to get the transmission we need built as quickly as we need it. The infrastructure bill does some of that work with its [other provisions](#), not least by investing \$65 billion in new transmission. Transmission isn't a glamorous part of the energy system, but it's crucial to an effective transition away from fossil fuels.

On top of the provisions that will help reduce carbon emissions, the law also [provides](#) \$47 billion to assist communities in adapting to climate change. That's the first real non-military federal funding for climate change adaptation. Given the rash of droughts, wildfires, floods, and heat waves we've been seeing, this funding is badly needed.

The Democrats' legislative effort had been stalled so long that it seemed doubtful they were ever going to pass anything. The companion "reconciliation" measure, if it eventually passes, would do even more for climate action. But even standing alone, the infrastructure bill is a big win for the climate.